

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS BALDWIN (1800-35), 1835

Sarah Goodridge (1788-1853)

watercolor on ivory

3 3/8 x 2 5/8 (8.5725 x 6.6675)

Gift of Adelaide R. Sawyer, 1907

Weis #4

Hewes Number: 2

Ex. Coll.: possibly owned by the sitter's father Eden Baldwin (b. 1768), to his granddaughter, the donor.

Publications:

Louisa Dresser, 'Portraits Owned by the American Antiquarian Society,' The Magazine Antiques 95 (November 1969):725-26.

Christopher Columbus Baldwin was librarian of the American Antiquarian Society from 1827 to 1835.¹ In this capacity, he built up the book and newspaper collection by writing to prominent authors and publishers to ask for copies of their work. Through his efforts, the American Antiquarian Society acquired the Thomas Wallcut collection of New England imprints in 1834. Baldwin recalled packing the over 4,400 pounds of bound volumes, loose pamphlets and manuscripts, which formed Wallcut's collection, stating: "The extent of them was altogether beyond my expectations.... Everything was covered with venerable dust and as I was under a slated roof and the thermometer at ninety-three, I had a pretty hot time of it.... The value of the rarities I found, however, soon made me forget the heat, and I have never seen such happy moments."² Baldwin preserved a variety of material, from common newspapers to rare first editions. He wrote to a colleague in 1834 "[M]y daily experience tells me that we cannot determine what is valuable and what is not. There is scarcely anything that issues from the press that will not be wanted by somebody."³ Under Baldwin's direction, work began on the first catalogue of the Society's collections, published after his death.

Before accepting the post at the American Antiquarian Society, Baldwin had studied at Harvard (from which he was rusticated) and practiced law in Barre and Sutton, Massachusetts. With his friend William Lincoln (1801-43), he published the Worcester Magazine and Historical Journal and later edited the National Aegis. His diary, housed at the Society, covers the years 1829 to 1835 and is filled with personal anecdotes, gossip, and his social engagements as well as notes about the weather and the history of Sutton. Baldwin also used his diary as a place to

record the activities of the American Antiquarian Society, to which he was elected a member in 1827.

Also interested in American antiquities, Baldwin was sent by the Society's Council to visit southern Ohio in the summer of 1835 in an effort to learn more about the ancient burial mounds located there. In August, he was killed in a carriage accident in Norwich, Ohio. He was thirty-five years old.⁴ This miniature was taken shortly before Baldwin's departure for the West. He sat for the miniature painter, Sarah Goodridge, who worked both in the Boston area and Worcester County. The miniature might have been painted in either location because both artist and sitter were in Boston in January and May and Templeton, Massachusetts, in April. Goodridge's younger sister, Eliza, also a miniature painter (see cat#16), was well acquainted with Baldwin and wrote to him in 1827 saying, 'I hope an opportunity will appear for me to do ample justice to that Proteus face of yours & if all the varieties cannot be represented in one picture, I will endeavor to remember the "majestic and sensible looking countenance" supposing you consider that of the goodly sort.'⁵ It was Sarah, the more experienced artist, however, who ultimately received the commission to paint Baldwin.

Sarah Goodridge started painting miniatures around 1818. Two years later, she moved from Templeton to Boston and opened her own studio. In that year she also became an informal pupil of the portrait painter Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828). Goodridge studied with Stuart for five years and her sister recalled, 'She went frequently and carried, by his request, her unfinished pictures in their various stages for him to criticize. At such times, he gave her many hints, for which she was very grateful, for it was the most useful instruction she had ever had.'⁶ Sarah Goodridge exhibited her work at the Boston Athenaeum and traveled to Washington, D.C. in 1828 and 1841 to pursue commissions.⁷ Her sitters included Gilbert Stuart, Daniel Webster (1782-1852), and other members of the middle and upper class of Boston.⁸ She steadily produced two miniature portraits a week as a mature painter and has been called America's finest woman miniaturist.⁹ Her work is distinctive for its directness and lifelike quality and, in her own day, Sarah Goodridge's miniatures were highly regarded for their accuracy of likeness.

Goodridge's portrait of Baldwin was the 'exact miniature' used as a reference for the full-sized canvas painting of the sitter painted posthumously by Chester Harding for the American Antiquarian Society in 1835 (cat#3).¹⁰ At the time, the miniature was still owned by the family

but was lent to Harding. The miniature descended in the family until it was given to the Society in 1907 by Baldwin's niece.

¹ Baldwin took a leave of absence in 1831-32, during which time Samuel Burnside served as acting librarian (see entry for Sarah Dwight Foster Burnside cat #16).

² Christopher Columbus Baldwin Diary, August 2 1834, reprinted in Nathaniel Paine, ed., Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin, (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1901): 317-18.

³ Christopher Columbus Baldwin to the Reverend John Pierpont, March 1834, Christopher Columbus Baldwin Papers, 1817-1835, American Antiquarian Society Manuscript Collection.

⁴ For a summary of Baldwin's life and memorial tributes made at his death, see Paine's introduction to Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin.

⁵ Eliza Goodridge to Christopher Columbus Baldwin, July 30, 1827, Christopher Columbus Baldwin Papers 1816-1835.

⁶ Eliza Goodridge Stone, quoted in George C. Mason, The Life and Works of Gilbert Stuart (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1879): 78-81.

⁷ Robert F. Perkins, Jr. and William J. Gavin, The Boston Athenaeum Art Exhibition Index, 1827-1874 (Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1980), 66.

⁸ Agnes M. Dods, 'Sarah Goodridge,' The Magazine Antiques 51 (May 1947): 328-29.

⁹ Dale T. Johnson, American Portrait Miniatures in the Manney Collection (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990): 125.

¹⁰ May 1836, Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849 , 329.